

GILC 63 WRITINGS POEM DRAFTS, 1993, 1996, [19--]

CAMERON

[25 pages]

1/48

MOURNING BECOMES A CLANDESTINE ACT

DRAFT #1

①.

Maybe just sitting anywhere, the grief can hit. In the most inopportune places. It ranges from uncontrollable sobbing to gripping rage. But these feelings cannot be expressed anywhere at any time. It doesn't seem fair to the memory to the life of a loved one who has died. It's not fair that poor ~ no more, — the rest of our lives must go on. It's a denial, even repression, a clandestine act.

Today is October 26th, the first anniversary of my grandfather's death. Today I planned to be in meditation, in seclusion. I wanted to devote myself to his memory, maybe make lemonade like he did or drink beer like he did ~ maybe walk around talking to myself like he did. Instead I'm in a hospital emergency room - feeling like maybe I will die today. In between my physical agony, looms a deep sadness verging on an even deeper loneliness. In the span from the first drawing of my blood to my inevitable wheel chair ride to my hospital room, I begin to feel ^{the} panic setting in. My thoughts have no logical course, I'm almost delirious although outwardly I believe I'm conveying absolute calm. I'm thinking that perhaps my grandfather is here somewhere in the hospital and he will take me away - forever. Then I feel how could I have betrayed him, I was suppose to mourn him today but instead I'm here and there is little mourning. I feel such remorse. I know for certain it's because of my grandfather that I'm here

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026 with funding from
CLIR DHC Grant 2026-2028

MOURNING: A CLANDESTINE ACT

Barbara M. Cameron

There's always the sense of ~~dark~~ betrayal. The memory lingers and lives each time one dares to laugh, to smile. Whenever I think about death I think of the rich smells of ~~an~~ dusk, just immediately after the sun has set with that coolness of air settling in. There's even a frost a coolness to death but it's never as beautiful as lifeless winter. There's absolutely no glamour or romance involved with death. You love someone dearly, tenderly sweetly; infinity comes to mind and then that person is dead. But in order for each of us to make sense of why we are here then must come the inevitable. Dealing with Death.

I have no hesitation in sitting on a bench in between much older

people from me. One is Knodding asleep
The other two are discussing the days
schedule for them sliced between
how they can get along with anyone. I
almost want to take them home. They
don't know I'm sitting actually eavesdropping
as I wait for my lab. Because they're
old people, I think they are closer to
death than me. That's easier to believe.

people from me. One is knowing what
the other two are discussing the days
schedule for them. Sliced between
how they can get along with anyone. I
almost want to take them home. They
don't know I'm sitting actually watching
as I wait for my turn. Because they're
old people, I think they are closer to
their than me. That's what I believe.

The River Is Home

There is the feeling of coming home
On top of this hill
Below winds the river
We have traveled for many miles
But only at this place is there home.

There is nothing you can say that will make me believe you again
The sun shines through you like bare branches
The day ~~stings with heat~~ ^{promises warmth}
But there is no comfort leaning against a bare tree

What I long for
Reflects in the shimmering river light
Stars have gathered to greet me
Sometimes they send a hawk or an eagle
Flying slowly overhead until we have crossed.

You are like dead grass on the hill
Shadows from clouds are your only companions
It used to be green
Birds used to sit there

The river lets me go
It whispers
Come back
Sit among the trees
Near my soft shores.

Your smiles are falling leaves of lies
There is nothing you can say that will make me believe you again

The river is home
Constant as bare trees
Moving slowly under winter ice
Rushing as meadowlarks sing it to warmth.

Your truth is buried in the thickness of the frozen river
Going no where
The same winter after winter

Mysteries and secrets
hidden in pebbles and stones
Bring me to soothing, cool swirls
Sometimes a fish gently bites
The river is home
The shade of weeping willows
Holding me close

When I walk near you, I hear the warning sounds of rattlesnakes

Barbara M. Cameron

GILC 63
CAMERON

WRITINGS

POEM DRAFTS, 1993, 1996, [19--]

[25 pages]

1/48

GILC 63
CAMERON

WRITINGS

POEM DRAFTS, 1993, 1996, [19--]

[25 pages]

1/48

searching

i can't ask you these questions
they are like blowing dust
creating small whirlwinds
traveling alone
hot sun is their witness.



Santa Fe 1993

Looking at the mountains
from the sidewalk
beside the cemetery
with bare trees,
~~they blend into~~ a grey wash.
The headstones and grave markers
are the colors of the mountains.
The mountains are the colors of the trees.
The trees are the colors of the sky.
The sky is the color of ~~my mood~~
~~when I think of you,~~
The shades of grey
~~from light to dense, to flat to neutral,~~
yet in the greyness of the sky
are hints of hope
of a bird flitting overhead
ignoring the cold, ~~and the~~ icy wind
that blows the colors about like bouncing balls.
The dry smokey burning pinon and cedar
conceals truth and daring.
We can only wait for warm May Spring
when the mountains
when the trees
when the sky
when the birds
forget your pain.

Barbara M. Cameron

GILC 63
CAMERON

WRITINGS

POEM DRAFTS, 1993, 1996, [19--]

[25 pages]

1/48

GILC 63
CAMERON

WRITINGS

POEM DRAFTS, 1993, 1996, [19--]

[25 pages]

1/48

When the visitors come

Your music plays
within the melodies lies this truth
You and I have grown up together.
Separate but together
Night time after night time
Stars drinking in our beauty
Our love Our oneness
The exquisiteness of our desires
The tenderness of our eyes
Even then our small hands held one another
Two young girls running, laughing in the trees
A forest of our own where our house is hidden
In this house, we have lived together.
My dreams bring you to me
when you were in northern Africa, we argued.
Each visit is a separate story of us,
Egypt, Delphi, Olympia, Baha Sapa
thunderous Oklahoma
soft Santa Fe.
The mysterious shadows in your eyes
are the places we live.
when we meet
you will know, you will know, you will know.

Your music plays
Within the melodies
Lies this truth
You and I
Have grown up together
Separate but together
Night after Night
Stars
Drinking in our beauty
Our love
Our oneness

The mysterious shadows
in your eyes
are the places
we live
when we meet
you will know
you will know
you will know

Nondilke
19 September 1996

Upon the suicide of
one
HIV positive
lesbian
17
hated
rejected
on reservation.

Her death
stuns me.
It is as if I too have died
bullet smashing
against skull and brain.

This suicide — blood
invisible blood
statistic. blood

I do not know
what her face looked like
how her voice sounded
~~what energy emanated~~
~~from her person.~~
I mourn for her
as if she was my best friend.

In my mind's eye
I see the fresh earth
holding Nodilke
in the twilight moments
when it can be as lonely
as it is peaceful.

The grandmother greets her.

Barbara M. Cameron

upon
the
suicide
of
one
HIV
positive
lesbian
17
hated
rejected
on
reservation

Her
Death
Stuns
me
Bullet
Smashing
skull
brain
Me

Suicide = blood
invisible
blood
statistic
blood

Fingers Touching
Bodies Close
Heart Races

Something I can't ~~find~~ have
deep in the blue of your eyes
We can go to faraway places
only in our secret world
We can't speak about it
Morning birds will never sing to us

~~FB~~

Your music plays, within the melodies
lies this truth

You and I have grown up together
separate but together

Nighttime after Night time
stars drinking in our beauty
our love our oneness -
the exquisiteness of our desires
the tenderness of our eyes

Our small hands held one another even then
two young girls running, laughing in the trees
A forest of our own, where our house sits
~~Our house built in the trees~~

In this house, we have lived together
throughout childhood, through adolescence
into adult into eternity

My dreams bring you to me
~~Sometimes you are in Africa~~

When you were in Africa
we argued, You had to stay
separate but together

Each visit is a separate story of us
Africa, Egypt, the desert
the eternalness of love

I Need to Get to Caminodel Monte Sol

The paved road winds ~~gently~~ ~~down~~
gently ~~then~~ toward downtown Santa Fe

An abundance of trees gracefully
protects adobe walls and houses

The serenity and peace this
Sun Mountain presents envelops me.

~~I remember that~~

I think of mountain springs
feeding and nourishing life on mountains
I know I could

Wearing Short Hair in Order to be a Blonde

Every morning of my childhood, Grandma
braided my hair in traditional Lakota Braids

On occasion she braided it tightly
in "French" braids much to my dismay

The struggle to sit still, to quiet my
energetic young body was a routine I hated

In third grade in a temper tantrum
I took scissors to my hair and whacked it short

My third grade picture ~~revealed~~ revealed
uneven short hair and a smile

Thereafter I never wore the long hair
that returned in braids

I often stared at my third grade photo
through the remainder of grade and high school

I compared it with my first grade photo
with two braids, one ~~by~~ braid resting on ~~my~~
the front of my body and the second behind my shoulder

GLC 63
CAMERON

WRITINGS

POEM DRAFTS, 1993, 1996, [19--]

[25 pages]

1/48

Nondilke
19 September 1996

Upon the suicide of
one
HIV positive
lesbian
17
hated
rejected
on reservation.

Her death
impacted me in such a way
that words to describe the depth
of my emotions are illusive.

It is as if I have died too
bullet smashing against skull and brain.

I do not know what her face looked like
how her voice sounded
or what energy emanated from her person.
I mourn for her
as if she was my best friend.

In my mind's eye
I see the fresh earth
holding Nodilke
in the twilight moments
when it can be as lonely
as it is peaceful.
The grandmother greets her.



GILC 63
CAMERON

WRITINGS

POEM DRAFTS, 1993, 1996, [19--]

[25 pages]

1/48

Nondilke
19 September 1996

Upon the suicide of
one

17

HIV positive

lesbian

hated

rejected

on reservation.

Her death

has impacted me in such a way
that words to describe the depth
of my emotions are illusive.

It is as if I have died too
bullet smashing against skull and brain.

I do not know what her face looked like
how her voice sounded
or what energy emanated from her person.
I mourn for her
as if she was my best friend.

In my mind's eye
I see the fresh earth
holding Nodilke
in the twilight moments
when it can be as lonely
as it is peaceful.
The grandmother greets her.

Santa Fe 1993

Looking at the mountains
from the sidewalk
beside the cemetery
with bare trees,
they blend into a grey wash.
The headstones and grave markers
are the colours of the mountains.
The mountains are the colors of the trees.
the trees are the colors of the sky.
The sky is the color of my mood
when I think of you.
The shades of grey
from light to dense to flat to neutral,
yet in the greyness of the sky
are hints of hope
of a bird flitting overhead
ignoring the cold and the icy wind
that blows the colors about like bouncing balls.
The dry smokey burning pinon and cedar
conceals truth and daring.
We can only wait for warm May Spring
when the mountains
when the trees
when the sky
when the birds
forget your pain.

Barbara M. Cameron

GILC 63
CAMERON

WRITINGS

POEM DRAFTS, 1993, 1996, [19--]

[25 pages]

1/48

The River Is Home

There is the feeling of coming home
On ~~the~~ top of this hill
Below ~~the river winds~~ winds the river
We have traveled for many miles
But ~~only at this place is there home~~ is only at this place. *le*

*There is nothing you can say that will make me believe you again
The sun shines through you like bare branches
The day stings with heat
But there is no comfort leaning against a bare tree*

What I ~~miss~~ long for
Reflects in the shimmering river light
It is like stars have gathered to greet me
Sometimes they send a hawk or an eagle
Flying slowly overhead until we have crossed.

*You are like dead grass on the hill
Shadows from clouds are your only companions
It used to be green
Birds used to sit there*

The river lets me go
But it whispers
Come back
Sit among the trees
Near my soft shores.

*Your smiles are falling leaves of lies
There is nothing you can say that will make me believe you again*

The river is home
Constant as bare trees
Moving slowly under winter ice
Rushing as meadowlarks sing it to warmth.

*Your truth is buried in the thickness of the frozen river
Going no where
The same winter after winter*

Mysteries and secrets hidden in pebbles and stones
Bring me to soothing cool swirls
Sometimes a fish gently bites
The river is home
Under ~~the~~ shade of weeping willows
Holding me close

When I walk near you, I hear the warning sounds of rattlesnakes

Barbara M. Cameron

GLC 63
CAMERON

WRITINGS

POEM DRAFTS, 1993, 1996, [19--]

[25 pages]

1/48

Nondilke
19 September 1996

Upon the suicide of
~~one~~
HIV positive
lesbian
17
hated
rejected
on reservation.

Her death
~~impacted me in such a way~~ Stuns me.
~~that~~ words to describe
the depth of my emotions
are illusive.

It is as if I have died too
bullet smashing against skull and brain.

I do not know
what her face looked like
how her voice sounded
what energy emanated from her person.
I mourn for her
as if she was my best friend.

In my mind's eye
I see the fresh earth
holding Nodilke
in the twilight moments
when it can be as lonely
as it is peaceful.
The grandmother greets her.

Barbara M. Cameron

Look at me, I am not a separate woman

There is something soothing and calm about blue and green. I become ready; I put on these clothes. I sit. I wait. I walk around. I think about football. I talk to Linda about some of my favourite memories with my grandmother. I move my head from side to side, releasing tension. I whisper ten Our Fathers. In time of need I resort to the Catholics and then I ask the Tunkasila. But I have to find comfort and safety, they exist in the clean gowns of blue and green.

The nurse comes to take my blood pressure, my arm feels like it will burst. Does it ever happen? Someone's arm exploding. I think this is an absurd thought. Do I dare ask the nurse?

Bits and pieces I say to Linda. This was a song by the Dave Clark 5. It was popular when I was a child. Bits and pieces I say to Linda. This is what is happening to me.

Bits and pieces of me taken away, taken out. I want to resist this, the ^{scalpel}scapel, the needle in my one good vein. My body is familiar with the blue and green and the absolute thud of going under.

My doctor will make me whole again, will heal me by taking something away from me, a part of my body, parts of my body.

I blame my mother. Her body suffers too. I watch her from San Francisco. I dream about her at night. She holds my hand.

The wait is two hours. Sometimes the doctor's office calls me to say, "Can you come in earlier. They are ahead of schedule in surgery". I cannot do that. I need those two hours to get ready, to face my fear, to think about my life.

The blue and green gowns are piled waiting for me. There is something soothing, calm about blue and green. I put on these clothes. One has to be tied in the back and the other opens in the front. The hospital sounds like an engine of a mammoth ship.

Barbara M. Cameron

GILC 63
CAMERON

WRITINGS

POEM DRAFTS, 1993, 1996, [19--]

[25 pages]

1/48

Me at Eleven

At eleven when my body began to bleed, I really hated it for a few weeks. I did not tell my grandmother but she found out which made me even more angry. I really did not want to experience the process of bleeding every month and ~~the~~ after awhile I began to feel incredibly powerful, just very strong. I felt like I had power over everyone and that I know more than everyone. My breasts were also developing and I became fascinated with white shoes and white pants. One day I looked into the mirror and stared at myself for a long time or what seemed like a long time. That was the first time that I became truly aware of myself. I stared into my eyes, looked at my nose, my skin, my mouth. I decided that I really liked my eyes but I could not grasp what was in them. Bleeding was connected to my eyes somehow. It was like peering out from the trees staring at myself. I also really began to enjoy being by myself, alone with no one to interrupt me. Sometimes I could just stare at myself when I was alone. It also seemed strange. At this time I also wanted to be a boy because even though I felt powerful, I also felt that I had lost my freedom. I could not go around without a shirt in the summer and my grandparents especially my grandmother seemed more focussed on me in an odd way that I did not understand. I still rode my bike. I especially liked to go to the top of the largest hill on the ranch and ride down which happened very fast and dangerous. When I was 11, starting to bleed was a very significant time. I felt many kinds of emotions that I felt before but there seemed to be an added dimension to them. I had a huge fight with my mom around that time. I had come back to live with my grandparents. I lived with my mom off and on and spent one year with her in fourth grade, then moved home to my grandparents. It was never the same with my mom. When I was 11, I thought of that summer as the last summer of my innocence. I longed to leave or I really wanted time to pass quickly so I could meet my destiny. I especially liked the evenings during the summer. We sat outside burning mosquito smudge tubs. My horse Cricket was staked nearby the house so he could graze. I liked this because I could be near him anytime that I wanted. Otherwise in the day he was out away with the other horses. When I was 11, I think though I really hated the mess of bleeding especially because I was a very finicky child.

Barbara M. Cameron

GLC 63
CAMERON

WRITINGS

POEM DRAFTS, 1993, 1996, [19--]

[25 pages]

1/48

Adrian

His mother looked at his body and told us that she knew what they had done.

They could not stop her from looking at the tortured body of her eldest son.

Lakota deaths always made me believe that I had no future.

The wake had food, bread, chicken, potato salad, coffee and the smell of tobacco. His brothers kept asking him to get up. They kept talking to him like he was still alive. Adrian, Adrian, come on get up, it's time to go home. Adrian, Adrian, come on get up, it's time to home. Again and again.

My grandmother tells my grandfather as we are dressing for the wake, here - I found these, put them on.

At the wake I went outside to be alone sitting in our pickup, to look around, to think. My grandmother's tiyospiya was in a valley but it did not have the softness of a valley. It was rougher like a wild ravine. I liked it there because almost everyone spoke Lakota.

I'd go in a few times to check on my grandmother. Each time she wanted to be certain that I ate. I'd tell her that I was hungry but I did not feel up to eating because I thought it would make me sick. She had to be near her sister who was my cousin Adrian's mom so I really didn't need to be responsible for my grandmother.

I was relieved about that because I could spend more time away from casket, the crying. I did not have to stare at Adrian's dead body. I had already seen him at the funeral home, his head seemed to be lying to the left because his neck could not support him. Bullet hole covered, the make up stilled the violence of it.

I thought about the hills that surrounded us, this little town of my grandmother's, named for the man who killed Sitting Bull. The saints pass us by. Miracles seem not to happen to Lakota people even those of us forced to be Catholics.

The hearse is bringing him
Dust follows the hearst
on the still, sunny day
We wait at the top of the hill
The hearse drives slowly
down the hill
The drummers and singers
are there at the bridge
Singing for Adrian.

Military taps is blown, quietly. Oranges were placed on the all of the graves. Bright colors of oranges dotting the cemetary against the brilliant green of spring.

I watch as Aunt Hermine, Uncle Georgie, cousins Cookies and Crackers slowly walk home alone.

Barbara M. Cameron

GLC 63
CAMERON

WRITINGS

POEM DRAFTS, 1993, 1996, [19--]

[25 pages]

1/48

Adrian

His mother looked at his body and told us that she knew what they had done.

They could not stop her from looking at the tortured body of her eldest son.

Lakota deaths always made me believe that I had no future.

The wake had food; bread, chicken, potato salad, coffee and the smell of tobacco. His brothers kept asking him to get up. They kept talking to him like he was still alive. Adrian, Adrian, come on get up, it's time to go home. Adrian, Adrian, come on get up, it's time to home. Again and again.

My grandmother tells my grandfather as we are dressing for the wake, here - I found these, put them on.

At the wake I went outside to be alone sitting in our pickup, to look around, to think. My grandmother's tiyospiya was in a valley but it did not have the softness of a valley. It was rougher like a wild ravine. I liked it there because almost everyone spoke Lakota.

I'd go in a few times to check on my grandmother. Each time she wanted to be certain that I ate. I'd tell her that I was hungry but I did not feel up to eating because I thought it would make me sick. She had to be near her sister who was my cousin Adrian's mom so I really didn't need to be responsible for my grandmother.

I was relieved about that because I could spend more time away from casket, the crying. I did not have to stare at Adrian's dead body. I had already seen him at the funeral home, his head seemed to be lying to the left because his neck could not support him. Bullet hole covered, the make up stilled the violence of it.

I thought about the hills that surrounded us, this little town of my grandmother's, named for the man who killed Sitting Bull. The saints pass us by. Miracles seem not to happen to Lakota people even those of us forced to be Catholics.

The hearse is bringing him
Dust follows the hearst
on the still, sunny day
We wait at the top of the hill
The hearse drives slowly
down the hill
The drummers and singers
are there at the bridge
Singing for Adrian.

Military taps is blown, quietly. Oranges were placed on the all of the graves. Bright colors of oranges dotting the cemetary against the brilliant green of spring.

I watch as Aunt Hermine, Uncle Georgie, cousins Cookies and Crackers slowly walk home alone.

Barbara M. Cameron

GILC 63
CAMERON

WRITINGS

POEM DRAFTS, 1993, 1996, [19--]

[25 pages]

1/48

GLC 63
CAMERON

WRITINGS

POEM DRAFTS, 1993, 1996, [19--]

[25 pages]

1/48

Adrian

His mother looked at his body and told us that she ^{known} what they had done.

Lakota deaths always made me believe that I had no future.

Adrian's was very painful. His brothers kept asking him to get up. They kept talking to him like he was still alive.

The wake always had food, bread, chicken, potato salad, coffee. Oranges were placed on the all the graves. Bright colors of oranges dotting the cemetery against the fresh green of spring, against fresh dug earth.

~~They walk home~~ Aunt Hermine, Uncle George, my cousins Cochie and Crachee. ~~They walk home alone.~~

My grandmother tells my grandfather as we are dressing for the wake, here - I found these, put them on. At the wake I went outside to be alone, to look around, but to think. My grandmother's tiyospiya was in a valley but it did not have the softness of a valley. It was rougher like a wild ravine. I liked it there because almost everyone spoke Lakota. I'd go in a few times to check with my grandmother. Each time she wanted to be certain that I ate. I'd tell her that I was hungry but I did not feel up to eating anything because I thought it would make me sick. She had to be near her sister who was my cousin Adrian's mom so I really didn't need to be responsible for my grandmother. I was relieved about that because I could spend more time away from the intensity of the wake. I did not have to stare at Adrian's dead body. I had already seen him at the funeral name, his head seemed to be lying to the right ^{put} because his neck could not support him. Bullet hole covered, make up stilled the violence of it. I thought about the hills that surrounded us, this little town of my grandmother's, named for the man who killed Sitting Bull, my ~~dead~~ ^{us} cousin. Miracles seem not to happen to Lakota people even those of forced to be Catholics.

The hearse is bringing him
We wait at the top ^{of} the hill
Dust follows the hearst
on the still, sunny day
The hearse drives slowly
down the hill
The drummers and singers
are there at the bridge
Singing for Adrian.

Barbara M. Cameron

Credence

Bad Moon Rising

- You walked to the door
feeling the creek overflowing
don't go out tonight
shot in the chest
even ~~was~~ made white man's
news
in the best of all report.

GILC 63
CAMERON

WRITINGS

POEM DRAFTS, 1993, 1996, [19--]

[25 pages]

1/48

1993 1.3.3
1996 1.3.3
[19--] 1.3.3

